

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Field Hearing
Yakima, WA
June 10, 2006**

Good morning Chairman Goodlatte, my Congressman Rick Larson, and other members of the committee. Thank you for holding this hearing in Washington State to hear from farmers regarding issues we deem important to our industry. My name is Larry Stap and I am a 4th generation dairy farmer in the county of Whatcom near the town of Lynden. My great grandfather bought a parcel of land in 1910, cleared it, built a barn and house on it and it has been in our family ever since.

I am past president of the Washington State Dairy Federation, an organization that was formed to deal with legislative and regulatory issues over 100 years ago. I am currently president of Western States Dairy Producer Trade Association. This is an association of state associations formed to work on issues that we have in common. Member states are Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico, and three organizations from California. Nevada is an associate member.

There are numerous issues I would like to discuss, so for starters I will begin with our federal dairy price support program. This program is our safety net. It benefits all dairy farmers in the country equally and does not discriminate based on size, location or anything else. It is also a budget neutral program as the CCC sells the dairy products purchased back to the market when prices rise. Still it gets a huge "score" both at home and at the WTO and that is wrong.

Next up is trade. First and foremost is "don't give away the farm." WTO and free trade agreements are often not looked at kindly by agriculture, as we seem to often be the sacrificial lamb. USDA needs to fully and aggressively fund the DEIP program because when you combine that program with the Dairy producer self-funded CWT program we would have incredible export power on the world market. As far as imports are concerned USDA has to do a much better job of regulating them. All too often import quotas are exceeded and the USDA fails to take action to impose the additional legal controls and tariffs.

Immigration is an issue I'm sure you have heard a little about lately and I believe good progress is made on many of the agricultural issues. The one point I would like to make loud and clear is we as employers are not immigration officers and do not want to become one either. It is the government's job to verify legality of the immigrants and not ours as employers.

Federal Milk Marketing Orders (FMMO's) are another extremely complicated issue. We as an industry fully support them and the stability they afford us. There is a mechanism in place to deal with the changing issues and market conditions called a "hearing process." We as an industry would like to see the congress not mess with the rules of the federal order system but what we would like congress to do is give the FMMO system the tools and a mandate to respond quicker to hearing requests and proposals. Six months to a year would be a very noble and doable goal instead of the 18 to 36 month that it now takes.

On the environmental front there are numerous issues we are dealing. Probably the biggest and most volatile is the fact that the environmental community has gotten the judicial system to interpret the dairy industry as major polluters under the Super Fund Law (CERCLA) and manure has emissions that are reportable under Federal emergency and community planning laws (EPCRA). What makes it worse is there is no credible science out there to determine what emissions are being released from our dairies. This leads to two issues: First is please use your influence in whatever way you can to stop this as I am sure Congress never intended our dairy farms should be regulated under either EPCRA or CERCLA and secondly our land grant universities funding to do the research necessary for emission release research to meet our obligations under the Clean Air Act.

Our environmental solutions toolbox has one good tool, one promising tool and one dreadful tool.

- The EQIP program has worked relatively well for our industry. The challenge for you is to not tie a lot of strings to these programs and reduce their effectiveness and participation by our industry.

- The Conservation Security program is a companion program to EQIP. This program will become very important if WTO agreements ever start to reduce “amber-box” direct farm payments. This program had loft goals in the last farm bill but its funding level has relegated it’s authorization to a very few watersheds. It needs more gas in the tank to run right.
- The Wetland Reserve Program has been touted as a success but it has also come at a terrible price in some areas. Many acres of Prime farmland have been “sold” to the federal government under the auspices of “wetland enhancement”. The program allows a farmer to sell into the WRP program up to a 600’ upland buffer. This massive buffer is not supported by science as supporting wetland functions, yet these USDA rules has led to federal purchases of thousands of acres of prime farmland in the name of “wetland restoration”. Taxpayer dollars have been wasted to buy cropland never to be farmed again and never to support our farm communities again.

Animal ID is a program that is near and dear to me as I am participating in one of the national pilot projects. As you may well remember Washington State had the first BSE positive cow in the nation only a few miles from where we are today. The length of time and frustration it took to trace herd mates and other imported cows was way to long. Some were never found. In the most recent Alabama case, after weeks of searching, the birth origin and life history were unable to be determined. This is unacceptable. If a highly contagious disease were to hit, we would be unable to stop it without destroying large numbers of animals unnecessarily and crippling the livestock farmers of America. Fund and promote animal ID to the maximum.

Another animal health issue we ask you to do your utmost to fund is the National Johnes disease program. This is a disease that needs to be eradicated to protect animal health. Quicker and more accurate testing methods need to be researched as well as the removal of existing animals.

MILC is another program that has been to say the very least controversial. The biggest challenge for this program is that it comes directly out of our governments budget. It would be much better if we had available a price safety net that comes out of the market place. Of course this presents a challenge for you, do you want less taxpayer

money spent and allow the consumer to pay slightly more or do you want to continue the cheap food policy that has been in place for years.

Finally I leave you with a challenge. Do not ever let our country become dependent on imports for our food supply. We must produce our food supply on our own soil. Look what has happened to us as we have become dependent on foreign countries for our oil supply. Study history. When a country invades another country and wants to control its people, they take away their food. When you have control of their stomachs, you have control of the people because little else matters when you are trying to just live.

Thank you again for listening to me and coming out west to visit our beautiful state.

Larry Stap

Dairy Farmer, Lynden, Washington

President Western State Dairy Producers Trade Association

Past President Washington State Dairy Federation

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2004.

Name: Larry Stap

Address: 9410 Assink Rd, Lynden, WA 98264

Telephone: 360-354-4105

Organization you represent (if any): Washington State Dairy Federation
and Western States Dairy Producers Trade Association

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do NOT require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: _____ Amount: 0

Source: _____ Amount: 0

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: _____ Amount: 0

Source: _____ Amount: 0

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: _____

Signature: 

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

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U.S. House of Representatives
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: Larry Stap
2. Business Address: 9410 Assink Rd
Lynden, WA 98264
3. Business Phone Number: 360-354-4105
4. Organization you represent: Washington State Dairy Federation
Western States Dairy Producers Trade Assn.
5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:
I am a dairy farm owner/operator
6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:
- Past President WSDP
- Current President WSDPTA
- Farming most all my life
7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:
same as above

PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.